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34. DISTRIBUTION AND HOMING OF TREE SNAIL *RACHIS BENGALENSIS* LAMARCK (GASTROPODA) ON A NEW HOST PLANT

The tree snail *Rachis bengalensis* Lamarck (Gastropoda), was found only in six districts of West Bengal viz. Calcutta, Hooghly, Malda, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas, and Purulia (FAUNA OF WEST BENGAL - STATE FAUNA SERIES-3; Part 9, MOLLUSCA; Z.S.I. Calcutta 1992; Raut & Biswas 1991. But the same species (Z.S.I., lot no. Moll-906 IR No. 20196) was also found by us from the school compound of Baishnabchak (15 km from Kolaghat Station, beside the river Rupnarayan) Midnapur, West Bengal, India. Despite thorough observations, the authors did not find this snail at any other places in this district except at Baishnabchak.

Though Gude (1914) described its taxonomic characters and Raut & Biswas (1991) described its natural history, our observations differ in a few points. According to Raut & Biswas (loc. cit.) the snails were very specific for hardwood trees viz. *Mangifera indica*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Zizyphus mauritiana*, *Erythrina indica*, *Citrus aurantifolia* and *Lannaea coromandeliça*. But we observed that, although all the above mentioned trees were present in the garden in large numbers, the snail, *Rachis benghalensis* was found only on *Codiaeum variegatum* and *Aganosoma dichotoma*. Both these species are bushy shrubs. The snails were observed on these plants in colonies. They occasionally came down from their host plants at night, but never climbed *Mangifera indica*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Erythrina indica* and *Citrus aurantifolia* situated nearby. A few snails however, were observed occasionally on *Zizyphus*

mauritiana.

From our observations, we can conclude that the snails are not very specific to their host plant. Moreover, their first preference was for *Codiaeum variegatum*, followed by *Aganosoma dichotoma*, *Zizyphus mauritiana* and other plant species.

According to our study these snails generally prefer semi-decomposed leaves rather than bark, as their food. Regarding homing, in most cases (85%) after foraging, they were able to come back to the same host plant day after day. The snails travelled about 240 (30 - 735 ± 86) cm, in a night, though the distance covered by this snail depends on its size and amount of rainfall during the night. Regarding egg laying, our findings are similar to those of Raut & Biswas (loc. cit.). We, however, observed that a few snails laid their eggs on the dorsal surface of the leaf of *Aganosoma dichotoma*, but these failed to hatch.

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